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The Jubilee Council of the Moscow Patriarchate: A Synodal Adoption of Heresy

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In our age of post-patristic apostasy, many people are searching for the true Orthodox Christian faith—one that has resisted the heresy of ecumenism and the corrosive effects of modernism. Here in the United States, this search for truth is particularly prevalent and has even been highlighted by The New York Post in an article entitled “Young Men Leaving Traditional Churches for ‘Masculine’ Orthodoxy in Drove.”

During this quest for authentic Orthodoxy, many inquirers seek what they perceive to be “the most traditional” church, often turning their attention to the Moscow Patriarchate and its autonomous subordinate churches. These institutions are mistakenly regarded by some as bastions of traditional Orthodoxy where the heresy of ecumenism has allegedly failed to take root.



Participants of the Bishops' Council of 2000 in front of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior

A significant number of these inquirers come from politically and socially conservative backgrounds, equating their personal worldview with Orthodox traditionalism. They often struggle to differentiate between U.S. political and social conservatism and the deeper, spiritual essence of Orthodox tradition. As a result, they tend to conflate the external appearance of the Moscow Patriarchate with traditional Orthodoxy. This misconception is frequently perpetuated online by pseudo-bishops, priests, and false teachers who promote the narrative that no “official church” today has adopted heresy in a synodal capacity that is binding on the faithful.

Unfortunately, this assertion is far from accurate. On August 14th, 2000, at the Jubilee Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Moscow Patriarchate officially adopted *The Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church Toward the Other Christian Confessions*. This document presents a detailed statement outlining the Moscow Patriarchate's official position regarding the myriad of heretical confessions that exist worldwide. However, it is riddled with internal contradictions, heretical assertions, and fully Orthodox statements opposing the heresy of ecumenism. Like a demon mixing truth with lies, this official document, adopted by the Patriarchal Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate, simultaneously promulgates both heresy and Orthodoxy.

This Moscow Patriarchate Synodal document is divided into the following multiple sections:

1. The unity of the Church and the sin of human divisions.
2. The quest for the restoration of the unity.
3. Orthodox witness before the non-Orthodox world.
4. Dialogue with the non-Orthodox.
5. Multilateral dialogue and participation in the work of inter-Christian organisations.
6. Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church with the non-Orthodox on her canonical territory.
7. Internal tasks in relation to dialogue with non-Orthodox confessions.
8. Conclusion.

At the beginning of this document, in Section One, the Synodal text—published on the official website of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate—opens with statements that appear thoroughly Orthodox. These initial remarks are crafted to give the reader the impression that the document is a wholly Orthodox explanation and confession of faith. For example, in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2, it clearly states:

1.1. The Orthodox Church is the true Church of Christ established by our Lord and Saviour Himself, the Church confirmed and sustained by the Holy Spirit, the Church about which the Saviour Himself has said: "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt. 16:18). She is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the keeper and provider of the Holy Sacraments throughout the world, "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). She bears full responsibility for the proclamation of the truth of Christ's Gospel, as well as full power to witness to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

1.2. The Church of Christ is one and unique (St. Cyprian of Carthage, *On the Unity of the Church*). The unity of the Church, the Body of Christ, is based on the fact that she has one Head, the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:23), and that working in her is one Holy Spirit Who gives life to the Body of the Church and unites all her members with Christ as her Head. [1]

In Section One, paragraphs 1.10–1.16, the document begins to mix Orthodox doctrines with heretical teachings, while also subtly condemning the Russian Catacomb Church, which emerged during the Soviet-era persecution from those who rejected Metropolitan Sergius and the Moscow Patriarchate. For instance, in paragraph 1.10, it states: “By breaking canonical relations with his Local Church a Christian damages his grace-filled unity with the whole Church body, tearing himself away from it.” [2] As we know, Canon 15 of the First-Second Council of Constantinople in 861 A.D. does permit a clergyman to break communion with a heretic bishop and states:

Accordingly, these rules have been sealed and ordained as respecting those persons who under the pretext of charges against their own presidents stand aloof, and create a schism, and disrupt the union of the Church. But as for those persons, on the other hand, who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers, withdrawing themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, and teaching it barehead in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a Bishop before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not Bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers; and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions. [3]

In paragraph 1.15, the Moscow Patriarchal Synod reaffirms an Orthodox truth, stating: “The Orthodox Church, through the mouths of the holy fathers, affirms that salvation can be attained only in the Church of Christ.” However, they immediately undermine this statement in the following sentence: “At the same time, however, communities which have fallen away from Orthodoxy have never been viewed as fully deprived of the grace of God. Any break from communion with the Church inevitably leads to an erosion of her grace-filled life, but not always to its complete loss in these separated communities.” [4]

In the first half of the sentence, they confirm that salvation comes only to those within the Orthodox Church, yet they simultaneously assert that those who have separated themselves from Holy Orthodoxy are not entirely deprived of grace, despite their fall into apostasy. In a single sentence, they profess belief in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church while simultaneously declaring that apostates are somehow both separated and united with the Church. This effectively creates the notion of two churches and two graces. Saint Basil the Great, in Letter 188, speaks explicitly about those who have knowingly fallen away and separated themselves from the Church: “They who were broken off had become laymen, and, because they are no longer able to confer on others that grace of the Holy Spirit from which they themselves are fallen away, they had no authority either to baptize or to ordain.” [5] Similarly, Saint Cyprian of Carthage—whom the Moscow Patriarchate itself quotes in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.7, and whose ecclesiology has been affirmed by the Ecumenical Councils and preserved in the Church’s liturgical texts—writes in Letter 51 to Antonianus concerning Novatian: “Whoever he may be, and whatever he may be, he who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian. Although he may boast himself and announce his philosophy or eloquence with lofty words, yet he who has not maintained brotherly love or ecclesiastical unity has lost even what he previously had been.” [6] Is it not clear that the Patriarchal Synod of Moscow is directly teaching the opposite of Saint Cyprian of Carthage and Saint Basil the Great to just use two examples?



Glorification of some new martyrs and confessors of Russia in the 20th century in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior. August 20, 2000. On this day the Moscow Patriarchate did refuse to canonize St. Joseph of Petrograd, leader of the catacomb church who was canonized by St. Philaret of New York in 1981.

In Section Three, titled *On the Orthodox Witness Before the Non-Orthodox World*, paragraph 3.1 quotes a document from the Third Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference (1986) [7], which was produced in collaboration with the heretical World Council of Churches (WCC). The WCC comprises of hundreds of Protestant sects as well as ancient heretical organizations, such as the Monophysites and Nestorians, both of which have already been condemned by an ecumenical council. The quoted text states: “The Orthodox Church has always sought to draw the different Christian Churches and Confessions into a joint pilgrimage aiming at searching for the lost unity of Christians, so that all might reach the unity of faith.” [8]

At first glance, this statement, expressed in the flowery language that is typical of the WCC documents, may seem harmless. After all, who wouldn't desire unity among Christians? However, upon closer examination—particularly from an Orthodox dogmatic perspective—this statement presents serious theological problems.

The first issue with this statement, quoted by the Moscow Patriarchal Synod, is that it recognizes heterodox religious organizations as Christian churches. As demonstrated earlier, the Fathers of the Church unequivocally teach that those who have fallen away from the Holy Orthodox Church are not part of the Church and cannot even be called Christians.

This leads to the second problem: the assertion of a supposed “lost unity of Christians.” From an Orthodox perspective, the unity of the Church has never been lost, for the Orthodox Church has always been, and remains, the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Any notion of a “lost unity” implies that the Orthodox Church itself is somehow incomplete without a union with those heretical organizations that lay outside its ecclesiastical boundaries. This idea directly contradicts the ecclesiology of the Church Fathers, who affirm that the grace and truth reside solely within the Orthodox Church.

In Section Four, the *Dialogue with the Non-Orthodox*, the Moscow Patriarchal Synod attempts to explain and justify its participation in the pan-heresy of ecumenism through their involvement with the WCC. In paragraph 4.3, the Synod states: “Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church conduct dialogues with non-Orthodox confessions on the basis of faithfulness to the apostolic and patristic Tradition of the Orthodox Church and the teaching of the Ecumenical and Local Councils. Any dogmatic concessions or compromises in the faith are excluded. No document or paper adopted in theological dialogues and talks is obligatory for any of the Orthodox Churches until it is adopted by the Orthodox Church as a whole.” [9]

Despite this claim, the Moscow Patriarchate has been a member of the WCC since 1961 and, to this day, remains an annual dues-paying member, as required by the WCC. Upon applying for full membership, the Moscow Patriarchate was required to adopt and confess certain ecclesiological principles to meet the WCC's criteria. According to the WCC, there are three key steps necessary to gain membership:

1. *Application:* A church that wishes to join the World Council of Churches shall apply in writing to the general secretary.

2. *Processing*: The general secretary shall submit all such applications to the central committee (see art. II of the constitution) together with such information as he or she considers necessary to enable the central committee to make a decision on the application.

3. *Criteria*: Churches applying to join the World Council of Churches (“applicant churches”) are required first to express agreement with the basis on which the Council is founded and confirm their commitment to the purposes and functions of the Council as defined in articles I and III of the constitution. The basis states: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

Furthermore, the World Council of Churches states that: “Applicant churches also should understand themselves as conforming to the following criteria, and be ready to give an account of their faith and witness in relationship to these terms.” [10] The theological criteria for their membership in the WCC contains the following five points:

a) Theological

1. In its life and witness, the church professes faith in the triune God as expressed in the scriptures and in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

2. The church maintains a ministry of proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the sacraments.

3. The church baptizes in the name of the “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” and acknowledges the need to move towards the recognition of the baptism of other churches.

4. The church recognizes the presence and activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit outside its own boundaries and prays for the wisdom of all in the awareness that other member churches also believe in the Holy Trinity and the saving grace of God.

5. The church recognizes in the other member churches of the WCC elements of the true church, even if it does not regard them as churches in the true and full sense of the word. [11]

As outlined in the WCC document titled *Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, Appendix C: Proposal for Changes to the Rules of the World Council of Churches*, the criteria for membership are unambiguous. Through its voluntary membership in the WCC, the Moscow Patriarchate has accepted and adhered to these criteria, which include: recognizing other WCC member groups—such as Protestants, Monophysites, and Nestorians—as “Christian churches”; recognizing the baptisms of these groups (thereby implying the acceptance of mysteriological grace in the sacraments of heretics); and affirming that these heretical Protestant sects and ancient, ecumenically condemned heresies contain “elements of the true Church.”

By adopting these positions, the Moscow Patriarchate effectively professes an ecclesiology that contradicts Orthodox dogma—one that permits the concept of a divided and united Church and acknowledges two types of grace: one belonging to the Orthodox Church and another equally present in heretical confessions.

In paragraphs 4.8 through 4.11, the Moscow Patriarchal Synod continues in this document to impress the importance of joint theological dialogues and studies with the heterodox confessions. For instance, in paragraph 4.8 they state:

Joint study centres, groups and programs should be established within the theological dialogues. It is important that joint theological conferences, seminars and scholarly meetings, exchange of delegations, exchange of publications and information as well as joint publishing projects should be held on a regular basis. The exchange of experts, teachers and theologians is also of great significance. [12]

The Moscow Patriarchate and its Synod consistently argue that joint dialogue with those who reject Orthodoxy is a necessary means of witnessing the Orthodox faith. However, this claim stands in direct opposition to the teachings of Saint John Chrysostom, whose authoritative scriptural commentaries on the Epistle to the Romans refute the notion of engaging in dialogue with heretics and schismatics. Saint John Chrysostom, in his commentary on Romans 16:17-18, admonishes the faithful to avoid association with those who depart from the truth saying:

For, “I beseech you, brethren,” (he says). Then he also puts them on the defensive by showing the deceitfulness of those who abused them. For as though they were not at once to be discerned, he says, “I beseech you to mark,” that is, to be exceedingly particular about, and to get acquainted with, and to search out thoroughly—whom, pray? Why, “those that cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned.” For this is, if anything the subversion of the Church, the being in divisions.

For “such,” he says, “serve not the Lord, but their own belly.” And so there would be no offence, there would be no division, unless some opinion were thought of contrary to the doctrine of the Apostles. And this he here points out by saying, “contrary to the doctrine.” And he does not say which we have taught, but “which ye have learned,” so anticipating them, and showing that they were persuaded of and had heard them and received them. And what are we to do to those who make mischief in this way?

He does not say have a meeting and come to blows, but “avoid them.” For if it was from ignorance or error that they did this, one ought to set them right. But if they sin willingly, spring away from them. And in another place too he says this. For he says, “Withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Thess. iii. 6): and in speaking to Timothy about the coppersmith, he gives him the like advice, and says, “Of whom be thou ware also” (2 Tim. iv. 15). [13]

This commentary by Saint John Chrysostom is particularly insightful and relevant because it directly contradicts the “official” position adopted by the Patriarchal Synod regarding dialogue with heretics. Here, Saint John clearly states that we are not to engage in meetings (i.e., dialogues) with heretical confessions or even fight them. What scripture, canon, church father, or council would permit joint religious education and catechism with heretics as paragraph 4.10 suggests! Instead, we are called solely to separate ourselves from them and withdraw, as commanded by the Holy Scriptures and the Apostle Saint Paul.

At the end of the document the Sergianist Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate in attempt to control the narrative of what they considered approved and sanitized “official” Orthodoxy, states in Section Seven, paragraph 7.3 that:

The Church condemns those who, by using inauthentic information, deliberately distort the task of the Orthodox Church in her witness before the non-Orthodox world and consciously slander the Church authorities, accusing them of the “betrayal” of Orthodoxy. These people, who sow seeds of temptation among ordinary believers, should be subject to canonical sanctions. In this regard, guidance is given by the decisions of the pan-Orthodox meeting in Thessaloniki in 1998:

“The delegates unanimously denounced those groups of schismatics, as well as certain extremist groups within the local Orthodox Churches themselves, that are using the theme of ecumenism in order to criticise the Church leadership and undermine its authority, thus attempting to create divisions and schisms within the Church. They also use non-factual material and misinformation in order to support their unjust criticism. The delegates also emphasised that the Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement has always been based on Orthodox tradition, on the decisions of the Holy Synods of the local Orthodox Churches, and on Pan-Orthodox meetings... The participants are unanimous in their understanding of the necessity for continuing their participation in various forms of inter-Christian activity. We have no right to withdraw from the mission laid upon us by our Lord Jesus Christ, the mission of witnessing the Truth before the non-Orthodox world. We must not interrupt relations with Christians of other confessions who are prepared to work together with us ... During Orthodox participation of many decades in the ecumenical movement, Orthodoxy has never been betrayed by any representative of a Local Orthodox Church. On the contrary, these representatives have always been completely faithful and obedient to their respective Church authorities, and acted in complete agreement with the canonical rules, the Teaching of the Ecumenical Councils, the Church Fathers and the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church.”

A threat to the Church is also presented by those who participate in inter-Christian contacts, speaking on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church without the blessing of the Church authorities, as well as by those who bring temptation into the midst of Orthodoxy by entering into canonically inadmissible sacramental communion with non-Orthodox communities. [14]

In the final section of this ecumenist document, the attitude of the Sergianist Moscow Patriarchate becomes unmistakably clear, as they attempt to manipulate their flock into unquestioning obedience to their ecumenical agenda. Their efforts to control the faithful and steer them toward this agenda are most evident in their accusations against the confessors of Holy Orthodoxy, alleging that these confessors use “non-factual material and misinformation” to intimidate others from standing up and speaking out against the public preachers of heresy. This accusation, however, could not be further from the truth, as the ecumenists themselves regularly and shamelessly document their own ecumenical activities.

Interestingly enough, in the final paragraph, they also condemn those ecumenists who, while practicing ecumenism, have given sacramental communion to non-Orthodox. At the same time, they recognize the mysteries of Roman Catholicism and have yet to revoke their own eucharistic communion with the Roman Catholic Church, which was established in 1969. [15] To assert that “during [the] Orthodox participation of many decades in the ecumenical movement, Orthodoxy has never been betrayed by any representative of a Local Orthodox Church” is nothing less than an outright and blatant falsehood.

Do we not have video evidence of then-Bishop Kirill at the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Canberra (1991), where he declared, “Orthodox people would like the World Council of Churches to be the cradle of the one Church of the future”? [16] Do we not have a video of Metropolitan Anthony of the Department of External Church Relations praying with Monophysites at the Tomb of Baselios Marthoma Mathews III in 2023, in open violation of the Apostolic Canons and the Canons of Laodicea? [17] Do we not have footage of Patriarch Kirill praying with the Monophysite Armenian Patriarch in 2010, violating the same canons? [18] Or what about Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev’s public declaration on Russian television and on behalf of the Department of External Church Relations, stating, “De facto, we recognize the mysteries of Roman Catholics”? [19]

This heretical document, produced by the Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate, blatantly contradicts the teachings of the Fathers, recognizes the sacraments of various heretical sects, and involves the church in ecumenical organizations where adopting a heretical ecclesiology is a prerequisite. Of course, some pseudo-resistors against ecumenism will argue that, because this document was produced nearly twenty-five years ago and most people are unaware of it, it is irrelevant—and that somehow, heresy and schism are healed by the passage of time despite no act of renunciation or actual repentance ever being given.

Regardless of how long ago this document was synodally adopted or how many people are aware of its existence, it remains an official document of the Moscow Patriarchate. It was synodally adopted and is still published on the official websites of the Patriarchate, including the current Department of External Church Relations website, which is responsible for participating in and documenting all of their heretical ecumenism. [20]

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